

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 07398 251907Z

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ACTION EB-11

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, FR, UK

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: FRANCO-BRITISH MEETING ON CONCORDE MARCH 29

1. AFP REPORTS MARCH 25, AS DOES LE MONDE IN ITS AFTERNOON EDITION, THAT FRANCO-BRITISH MINISTERIAL MEETING ON FUTURE OF CONCORDE PROGRAM WILL BE HELD IN PARIS ON MARCH 29. AFP REPORTS AS SOURCE STAFF OF FRENCH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT, AYMAR ACHILLE-FOULD, WHO WILL MEET FIRST WITH WEDGEWOOD BENN. OLIVIER GUICHARD, FRENCH MINISTER OF EQUIPMENT AND TRANSPORT, WILL JOIN DISCUSSIONS LATER IN THE DAY. LE MONDE REPORTS PREPARATORY MEETING AT WORKING LEVEL WAS HELD IN PARIS MARCH 20 AND ANOTHER IS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 26. AFP NOTES THAT IS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 26. AFP NOTES THAT MARCH 29 MEETING IS BEING HELD AT UK REQUEST.

2. LE MONDE ATTRIBUTES TO "AERONAUTICAL CIRCLES IN PARIS" THE BELIEF THAT WEDGEWOOD BENN'S RECENT GLOOMY REPORT TO COMMONS ON CONCORDE'S FUTURE HAD DUAL PURPOSE OF BLACKENING CONSERVATIVES' RECORD AND STRENGTHENING FUTURE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S HAND IN NEGOTIATIONS

WITH FRANCE "IN AERONAUTICAL FIELD AS WELL AS IN FRAMEWORK OF COMMON MARKET." THESE CIRCLES ARE REPORTED AS ADDING THAT UK MUST

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PAGE 02 PARIS 07398 251907Z

NOW COME UP WITH PRECISE PROPOSALS ON CONCORDE'S FUTURE IN

RESPONSE TO GOF PROPOSALS ANNOUNCED LAST MONTH.

3. WEDGEWOOD BENN REMARKS TOUCHED OFF LITTLE EDITORIALIZING IN FRENCH PRESS AND CERTAINLY NO RENEWAL OF PUBLIC CONTROVERSY HERE OVER FUTURE OF CONCORDE PROGRAM AS SEEMS EXIST IN UK, JUDGING FROM AMEMBASSY LONDON REPORTS. IN PUBLISHING RESULTS LAST WEEK OF PUBLIC OPINION POLL ON FRENCH "PRESTIGE," FRANCE-SOIR DID REPORT THAT 45 9/9 OF FRENCH FAVOR SCRAPPING CONCORDE (JUST AS 37 0/0 FAVOR SELLING THE LINER FRANCE). HOWEVER, WHAT PUBLIC INTEREST THERE IS SEEMS, AT THIS STAGE, TO BE FOCUSSED NOT ON PRESTIGE BUT ON JOBS. AEROSPATIALE HAS JUST ANNOUNCED CUTBACK OF 870 EMPLOYEES IN 1974 TO BE ACHIEVED THROUGH NORMAL ATTRITION, RETIREMENT, ETC. WHILE CUTBACK WAS SAID TO BE JUSTIFIED ON GROUNDS OF GENERAL SLUMP IN FRENCH AERONAUTICAL INDUSTRY AND NOT JUST AS RESULT OF SLOWDOWN IN CONCORDE PRODUCTION, IT HAS GENERATED PREDICTABLE CONCERN BY AEROSPATIAL UNIONS OVER JOB SECURITY AND, OF COURSE, FUTURE OF CONCORDE.

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